

Budget & Finance Standing Committee
Thursday, October 8, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.
REMOTE MEETING
-Minutes-

Present: Chair, Councilor Melissa Cox; Councilor John McCarthy; Councilor James O'Hara; Councilor Jen Holmgren

Also Present: Acting CAO, Vanessa Krawczyk; City Clerk, Joanne M. Senos; Police Chief, Ed Conley; Auditor, Kenny Costa; Grants Administrator, Jaimie Corliss

Absent: Vice Chair, Councilor Scott Memhard

*This meeting was conducted remotely through ZOOM
All votes by ROLL CALL*

Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Chairperson Cox announced, "This meeting is recorded by video and audio in accordance with state open meeting law. Consistent with the Governor's orders, suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law and banning gatherings of more than 25 people, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation. The public may not physically attend this meeting, but every effort will be made to allow the public to view and listen to the meeting in real time. Persons who wish to do so are invited to view the meeting and you have the information that was on the posting. If you are calling in on a phone, you can press *9 to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or a device, there is a raised hand button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either these options to be recognized to speak."

Summary of Discussion: Chairperson Cox informed the attendees that **Councilor O'Hara** was sitting in for **Councilor Memhard** this evening, and that **Councilor Holmgren** was also in attendance.

1. Memorandum from Veteran Services Director re: request acceptance of donations in the amount of \$1,295

Summary of Discussion: Ms. Krawczyk stated that on behalf of **Veteran Services Director Adam Curcuru**, once again through his good efforts, the City has received several donations that ranged between \$25-\$100. Citizens have donated to support continued efforts to serve our veterans and active duty military communities, and she asked that the committee accept them with gratitude.

Chairperson Cox asked **Councilor McCarthy** if he had any questions. Having none, **Councilor McCarthy** thanked the donors, and shared that he had reviewed the list of individual donors, and although the committee usually mentioned them by name, there were too many tonight to read each one.

Chairperson Cox asked **Councilor O'Hara** if he had any questions. Having none, **Councilor O'Hara** thanked everyone for their efforts.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor McCarthy, the Budget & Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to recommend that the City Council accept various cash donations to support Cape Ann Veteran Services in the amount of \$1,295 from the citizens and business partners within our community.

Summary of Discussion: Chairperson Cox thanked everyone who donated to the Veteran Services office since the city is not lacking in worthwhile causes.

The following items were taken out of order:

3. Memorandum from Police Chief re. request, in accordance with GCO Sec. 2-52, to commit a 5-year obligation and payment schedule for tasers

Summary of Discussion: Police Chief Ed Conley thanked the Councilors in attendance, and explained that this money has already been budgeted. Per the City Ordinance, the Police Department needs to request permission from the City Council to enter into a 5-year contract for tasers. He explained that the sum of money requested in Year 1 is more expensive than the subsequent years because of the initial start-up costs for the tasers to be deployed. The "Train-the-Trainers" education is also included. He stated that otherwise, this money is already in the GPD line item, they just need to be able to spread it out over 5 years.

Councilor McCarthy asked if the GPD is scheduled to receive all of the tasers at once that will be paid for over 5 years, or is it a 5-year plan to add tasers every year? **Police Chief Conley** thanked him for the excellent question, and explained that this is the total cost for the police department to get up and running with the total complement of tasers. The payments are spread out over 5 years to make it more budget-friendly.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor McCarthy, the Budget & Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to recommend that the City Council approve under MGL c. 30B, §12B a term of contract to permit the procurement officer to award a five-year lease agreement and payment schedule to Axon Enterprise Incorporated for the purchase of tasers and expenses related thereto for the Gloucester Police Department for a total of \$61,030

4. Memorandum from the City Clerk re: request acceptance of a grant from the Center for Tech and Civic Life in the amount of \$11,767.50

Summary of Discussion: City Clerk Joanne M. Senos explained that on September 22, 2020, the Secretary of State's Office informed the City Clerk's office that there were private grant funds available to all City Clerks in regard to having a secure and safe election on November 3, 2020. The Secretary of State's office recognized that there were a lot of expenses that were not funded. The City Clerk's office applied for the grant, and was awarded \$11,767.50. She mentioned that she has spoken to other City Clerks throughout the Commonwealth, and discovered that the state has awarded anywhere between \$8,000-\$15,000 depending on a city's population and registered voters. These funds will help order supplies and hire temporary staff to assist with the vote by mail, absentee, and early voting in person ballot counting at the end of the night. She shared that the budget supply account has already been exhausted. This funding will also make it possible to man a checkout table at each polling location since the City was short-staffed for poll workers during the Massachusetts State Primary on September 1, 2020 and needed to file for a waiver. Expenses for any other necessary administrative equipment that needs to be purchased and received in time for the election will also be deducted from this funding. She stated that if for any reason all of the funds are not used for the election day, the remaining amount can be used to cover the existing election account deficits.

Councilor O'Hara stated that he is sure that this money will be welcomed in the City Clerk's office. He praised the office for doing a wonderful job during the primary. He mentioned that he knows the office will experience difficulty as they did in the September election, so the funds will be well-used.

Chairperson Cox said that this money could not have come at a better time, and she thanked the Center for Tech and Civic Life for recognizing that Clerks' offices around the U.S. are experiencing massive shortages and monetary needs.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor McCarthy, the Budget & Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to recommend that the City Council accept under MGL c. 44, § 53A, a private grant for \$11,767.50 from the Center for Tech and Civic Life for the purpose of planning and operationalizing safe and secure election administration in the City for the 2020 election. The grant period is from June 15, 2020 through December 31, 2020, and there is no local match for this grant.

2. Memorandum from Grants Administrator re. request to accept Affordable Housing Trust's recommendation to fund \$200,000 to the YMCA of the North Shore for an affordable housing development project at Middle Street # 71

Summary of Discussion: Cape Ann Savings Bank Vice President/Commercial Loan Officer Mike Luster began the presentation. He stated that on August 13, 2020, the YMCA of the North Shore and their development consultant Affirmative Investments presented an application and request to the Affordable Housing Trust for \$250,000 for the demolition of the existing building and the construction of 44 one-bedroom senior affordable units. Since the request was received in advance, it provided the Cape Ann Savings Bank plenty of time to review it. He shared that it was well-presented by both organizations. The trust liked the number of units involved since it included so many people. One question asked was why senior housing was chosen instead of family. The number of people on the current waiting list was reviewed, and it was determined that seniors are presently severely cost-burdened, meaning more than 50% of their income is spent on housing. The number of proposed units fit the senior housing need, along with the Gloucester Housing Authority's five-year plan, since more one-bedroom units are required. There was a question regarding parking, and Affirmative Investments explained the ratio of parking to the number of units. Someone also enquired about outdoor space, and that was also addressed.

On August 13th, the Affordable Housing Trust voted on and unanimously approved an award of \$200,000 to the YMCA program since it did not have \$250,000 in its coffers. **Chairperson Cox** asked how much was in the trust's coffers. Mr. Luster stated that he believed it was approximately \$225,000-\$230,000, it had been awhile since he received an updated bank statement. He explained that the trust has had that amount since 2009 or 2010.

Chairperson Cox asked him to review the parking plan, and explained that the information packet that the City Council received did not upload the plans properly, so she wanted to view the plans located in the **City Clerk's** office before voting on this matter. She requested a two-week continuance if there were no time constraints. He offered to share the application information, and she responded that the application had uploaded clearly.

Councilor McCarthy told Mr. Lovasco that there were about 12 pages missing from the packet. Mr. Lovasco offered to share his plans and drawings on the screen, and **Chairperson Cox** asked if they included parking. He said that he could pull that study up if needed, and that the plans included a parking layout.

Chairperson Cox also told Mr. Luster that the committee had not received a copy of the August 13th Affordable Housing Trust meeting minutes. She asked if the trust has held a meeting since that date to approve the meeting minutes, and he said they had not. She mentioned that there are currently no 2020 trust meeting minutes available on the city website, so she would like to review them. Mr. Lovasco offered to share them.

He began his presentation with a slide that showed the project rendering. He explained that the building is currently a square, but the newly constructed building will be L-shaped. He elaborated that this was the most efficient way to create the units while providing parking where the YMCA pool level is currently located. An isolated courtyard greenspace will also be developed and utilized by residents. He mentioned that the new main entrance will be close to the one that currently exists, and that the exterior will provide a beautiful, almost historic appearance in the front, and will include columns. The units would be aligned in a way that would allow for at least 4 fully-ADA-accessible units, and all the other units included ADA modalities to accommodate the 62+ age group.

Three floors of actual housing will be created. A congregation area on the main floor will also be provided in the front, along with a community room for the residents and general public. A study was conducted that reviewed all of the recently built senior housing in the city, and all of the current places per unit would be exceeded with this project. He mentioned that people have been receptive to the project, and the study concluded that a more than sufficient amount of parking will be provided, 27 parking spots for 44 units. **Chairperson Cox** informed Mr. Lovasco that she believed the ordinance required 1 ½ parking spaces per unit, and asked if they had received a variance. He replied that there was an application component to that which their consultant would be able to discuss. He realized that parking for the project will be discussed when they appear before the Zoning Board of Appeals during a Special ZBA meeting being held on October 22, 2020. He stated he was not sure if a variance would be required since it is 40B project.

Chairperson Cox expressed feeling like the “cart is being put before the horse” in this situation in terms of funding something that has not been fully approved. She asked Mr. Lovasco if that was the end of his presentation as far as the building layout was concerned. She checked with **Councilors McCarthy and O’Hara** to see if they had any questions that regarded the layout. She stated that she would love to fund something that had been vetted by the Planning & Development Committee, the Planning Board, and ZBA. She asked if they needed to have the funding in place. He explained that a Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) project required a multi-approval process. He said they have tried to create a one-stop application for the DHCD since that is the authority that would fund this project through the low-income tax credit program. She asked when that application was due, and he responded January 2021. She questioned if that is when the application needed to be submitted by, and he replied that they sought Authorization of Approval of Funding. The funding would be tied to authorization to build the project. He explained that receiving community support is a DHCD requirement, and as the process moves forward, it determines which projects received the DHCD funding. Once approved, additional funding streams become available. He stated that the idea is to best position the project. This is helped by meeting the criteria including having project approvals in place (such as for those for approved zoning and community funding) to support and match funding that would be given by the DHCD. If a project does not have the community funding in place, such as donations granted by the Community Preservation Act, the Affordable Housing Trust, and home money, it would not be possible for the \$500,000-\$1 million dollars in community funding to be secured that is needed in order to advance the project. He said if that is not received, a project can go three rounds that take up to a year and a half each, and end up with a vacant building for the next seven years, which is what they are desperately trying to avoid. If the City Council approved the funding, the DHCD is contingent on the other funding having already been approved.

Chairperson Cox explained that a similar situation that was recently handled this way was the project currently being built on what used to be the Cameron’s restaurant property, but in that case, the city buy-in requested by Action, Inc. came a long time after numerous community meetings were held and plans were reviewed. After the process was followed, only \$10,000 from the Affordable Housing Trust was received from the community to support the project. She expressed embarrassment by that limited buy-in, but the project’s donation requests had been continuously denied. Mr. Lovasco replied that he completely

understood what she was saying, He provided background, and stated that when the opportunity for building a new YMCA at Gloucester Crossing had been advanced, the YMCA was approached by the City and community and asked what they planned to do with the existing Middle Street building, and strongly encouraged to create affordable housing. During several meetings regarding the project at the former Fuller School site, it was expressed by some people that the two projects were tied together; that in order for the Fuller site to be secured, the YMCA needed to provide affordable housing on Middle Street. That ended up not being the outcome since 80% of required affordable housing is now provided by the Dolben property. When they YMCA presented to the community, they were asked to increase the amount of affordability supplied by the project, so the units will be at 30% median income.

Chairperson Cox mentioned that while she tried to stay on point and get the funding approved for the project, she felt like she had asked more Planning & Development questions this evening because she found herself wanting to learn more about the project since a large amount of money has been requested.

Councilor McCarthy observed that Mr. Lovasco had already submitted to the ZBA on the comprehensive permit application, and asked if there had been any feedback from the ZBA. He also attempted to clarify that this project was considered a Friendly 40B. Mr. Lovasco replied that it had not been taken up yet since this is the first pass of the application, and confirmed that the project is a Friendly 40B. **Councilor McCarthy** told **Mr. Lovasco** that although it was not his fault that the plans had not downloaded on the City website properly, he agreed with **Chairperson Cox** that the committee needed time to obtain and review the plans before this matter is moved forward. **Chairperson Cox** asked the **City Clerk** and **Acting CAO** if there was any reason why this matter could not be continued until the next Budget & Finance Committee meeting. They both agreed that there was no reason unless there was a timeline issue where the project needed to have funds secured by a certain time, which does not appear to be the case. **Chairperson Cox** asked **Councilor O'Hara** if he had any questions or concerns, and he expressed agreement with the committee members that it was extremely important that the entire document should be visible for inspection and review.

Chairperson Cox mentioned that **Councilor Holmgren** was on an affordable housing board, and asked if she wanted to share her thoughts. **Councilor Holmgren** thanked her for the opportunity, and expressed excitement for this project. She agreed that having the complete packet reviewed was important, and wondered if the Affordable Housing Trust was currently unable to convene so that the meeting minutes could be approved, if it was possible for the draft minutes to be reviewed. She expressed hope that enough community support could be garnered to approve the requested funding from the Affordable Housing Trust.

Chairperson Cox explained that she wanted to set the project up for success since she has learned from mistakes made in the past. She requested to meet with Mr. Lovasco to discuss the project proposal so she can facilitate it being presented to the committee. She requested a copy of the Affordable Housing Trust draft minutes from Mr. Luster. **Grants Administrator Jamie Corliss** had informed **Chairperson Cox** that a video of that meeting was available. **Chairperson Cox** shared that it is nearly impossible to upload plans into the committee packets available on the City website, and apologized for not having had enough time to review the packet for her to have realized that there were pages missing. The **City Clerk** disclosed that the **City Clerk's** office does not have a full copy of the plans because the information was submitted in the **Mayor's** report, so the information found in the packet is what was provided to the **City Clerk's** office. **Ms. Corliss** shared that the entire application is available on the Affordable Housing Trust page on the City website under Pending Applications, and the application and full plans are able to be pulled up nicely in a full PDF from that location. **Chairperson Cox** asked **Ms. Corliss** to provide the **City Clerk's** office with a paper copy of that information so that the application and plans can be reviewed by the City Councilors when they visit the office. Mr. Luster asked **Chairperson Cox** what is needed from the Affordable Housing Trust, and she responded that she would appreciate being provided a copy of the draft minutes that can be circulated among the City Council members. She expressed that

while excited about affordable housing, she was concerned about the fact that the proposed plan only offered 27 parking spots for 44 apartments in the already congested downtown area, but stated that she was unsure if anything could be done to rectify that since it was a Friendly 40B process. Mr. Lovasco said that **Chairperson Cox's** opinion mattered, and he believed that when they meet to review the project, she will be able to see how much parking is usually allotted for these type of projects compared to what is being offered in this particular one, and after that he thinks she will be very happy with the number of parking spaces provided in this proposed plan. She stated that senior housing units have not provided enough parking spaces in the past, so she does not want that mistake to be repeated. She thanked Mr. Luster and the YMCA team for attending.

This matter has been continued until Thursday, October 22, 2020.

Summary of Discussion: Councilor McCarthy shared with Mr. Lovasco that he had already read at least 100 pages of the project information that was submitted, and was really impressed with the fact that the AMI numbers are great, more units than he originally thought were being proposed in this project. He believed it would be quite an advantageous situation if this many units could be placed in that area if the project is permitted to move forward. **Chairperson Cox** expressed appreciation for the YMCA's flexibility so that this matter can be continued at the next committee meeting, and apologized to Mr. Lovasco for not being able to communicate that need prior to tonight's meeting.

City Auditor Kenny Costa advised there was no report for the Committee for this meeting. At the request of **Chairperson Cox**, **Mr. Costa** determined that there was currently \$217,593.87 in the Affordable Housing Trust account. Ongoing projects included \$10,000 designated to Harborview Village located at 206 Main Street and the Harborlight Community Partners Haven Terrace project that has been approved for \$8,750. That left \$198,000 as the available balance, and **Mr. Costa** expressed concern that if the YMCA project were approved, the entire account would be depleted. She asked if the monthly investment income earnings received would allow the entire \$200,000 to be provided to the YMCA project without shortchanging any other projects. **Mr. Costa** believed that was correct, and stated that in that event that any funding fell short, it could be adjusted on the Other Means budget line item.

MOTION: on a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor McCarthy, the Budget and Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Brianna Komi
Administrative Support
City Clerk's Office